

Healing Democracy Action Circles Unitarian Universalist Supplement

Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes

Together as Unitarian Universalist Congregations, we affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Parker Palmer's "Habits of the Heart":

- An understanding that we are all in this together;
- An appreciation of the value of 'otherness';
- An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways;
- A sense of personal voice and agency; and
- A capacity to create community.

Readings and hymns in this study guide are taken from *Singing the Living Tradition*, UUA, 1993.

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SESSION 1: An understanding that we are all in this together

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #429

Come into this place of peace
and let its silence heal your spirit;
Come into this place of memory
and let its history warm your soul;
Come into this place of prophecy and power
and let its vision change your heart.

William F. Schulz

Hymn #300: With Heart and Mind

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Is this Habit of the Heart – we are all in this together – supported in and promoted by Unitarian Universalism?
- What principles or purposes of Unitarian Universalism speak particularly to this habit?
- Are you conscious of being a part of the interdependent web of existence?
- Do you feel more connected with other people or with nature? What does that mean for you?
- How does Unitarian Universalism inform your sense of interdependence? How does Unitarian Universalism assist you with practicing this habit?
- Do you take this habit to heart? How is this habit reflected in your faith and values?
- How do you, as a Unitarian Universalist, live this habit in your daily life?
- Would you like to become more attentive to any aspects of this habit in your life?

Closing Words: Reading #683

Be ours a religion which,
like sunshine, goes everywhere;
its temple, all space;
its shrine, the good heart;
its creed, all truth;
its ritual, works of love;
its profession of faith, divine living.

Theodore Parker

SESSION 2: An appreciation of the value of “otherness”

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #434

May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations,
and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.
May we know once again that we are not isolated beings
but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,
to this community, and to each other.

Anonymous

Hymn #23: Bring Many Names

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Is this Habit of the Heart – an appreciation of the value of “otherness” – supported in and promoted by Unitarian Universalism?
- What principles or purposes of Unitarian Universalism speak particularly to this habit?
- Is celebrating diversity an important theme in your Unitarian Universalist faith? In what ways?
- How well do you think our congregation practices radical hospitality and the welcoming of differences? Are there ways we can improve?
- How does Unitarian Universalism inform your sense of appreciation of “otherness”? How does Unitarian Universalism assist you with practicing this habit?
- Do you take this habit to heart? How is this habit reflected in your faith and values?
- How do you, as a Unitarian Universalist, live this habit in your daily life?
- Would you like to become more attentive to any aspects of this habit in your life?

Closing Words: Reading #459

This is the mission of our faith:
To teach the fragile art of hospitality;
To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;
To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;
And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

William F. Schulz

SESSION 3: An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #444: This House

This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature.

It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring, both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion.

It is a house of truth-seeking, where scientists can encourage devotion to their quest, where mystics can abide in a community of searchers.

It is a house of art, adorning its celebrations with melodies and handiworks.

It is a house of prophecy, outrunning times past and times present in visions of growth and progress.

This house is a cradle for our dreams, the workshop of our common endeavor.

Kenneth L. Patton

Hymn #188: Come, Come, Whoever You Are

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Is this Habit of the Heart – an ability to hold tension in life-giving ways – supported in and promoted by Unitarian Universalism?
- What principles or purposes of Unitarian Universalism speak particularly to this habit?
- Do you hold the principle of acceptance of one another and encouragement to growth to be an important theme in your Unitarian Universalist faith? In what ways?
- Does your Unitarian Universalist faith challenge you to open-minded appreciation of differing viewpoints? Or do you find solace and comfort in a community of like-minded individuals?
- How well do you think our congregation practices holding tension creatively? Are there ways we can improve?
- How can we use our faith to help us accept or resolve differences?
- Do you take this habit to heart? How is this habit reflected in your faith and values?
- How do you, as a Unitarian Universalist, live this habit in your daily life?
- Would you like to become more attentive to any aspects of this habit in your life?

Closing Words: Reading #580

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done.

Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.

Mark Morrison-Reed

SESSION 4: A sense of personal voice and agency

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #462:

I shall take my voice wherever there are those who want to hear the melody of freedom or the words that might inspire hope and courage in the face of despair and fear. My weapons are peaceful, for it is only by peace that peace can be attained. The song of freedom must prevail.

Paul Robeson

Hymn #170: We are a Gentle, Angry people

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Is this Habit of the Heart – a sense of personal voice and agency – supported in and promoted by Unitarian Universalism?
- What principles or purposes of Unitarian Universalism speak particularly to this habit?
- Is it a matter of faith to you to speak your truth as you know it and to follow your conscience in your daily works? In what ways?
- Does your Unitarian Universalist faith challenge you to become a change agent? A force for good in the world? Do you get help for this from your Unitarian Universalist community?
- How well do you think our congregation encourages personal voice and agency? Are there ways we can improve?
- How do you, as a Unitarian Universalist, live this habit in your daily life?
- Would you like to become more attentive to any aspects of this habit in your life?

Closing Words: Reading #704

Go out into the highways and by-ways.

Give the people something of your new vision.

You may possess a small light,

but uncover it, let it shine,

use it in order to bring more light and understanding

to the hearts and minds of men and women.

Give them not hell, but hope and courage;

preach the kindness and everlasting love of God.

John Murray

SESSION 5: A capacity to create community

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #443:

We arrive out of many singular rooms, walking over the branching streets.

We come to be assured that brothers and sisters surround us, to restore their images on our eyes.

We enlarge our voices in common speaking and singing.

We try again that solitude found in the midst of those who with us seek their hidden reckonings.

Our eyes reclaim the remembered faces; their voices stir the surrounding air.

The warmth of their hands assures us, and the gladness of our spoken names,

This is the reason of cities, of homes, of assemblies in the houses of worship.

It is good to be with one another.

Kenneth L. Patton

Hymn #360: Here We Have Gathered

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Is this Habit of the Heart – a capacity to create community – supported in and promoted by Unitarian Universalism?
- What principles or purposes of Unitarian Universalism speak particularly to this habit?
- Do you think that the principle of acceptance of one another and encouragement to growth in our congregations increases the capacity to create community? Or does it inhibit community?
- Does the Unitarian Universalist principle about creating world community help create Beloved Community in our congregation?
- What are some ways our congregation lives into this Habit of the Heart?
- How can we be more attentive to this habit in our community?
- Do you take this habit to heart? How is this habit reflected in your faith and values?

Closing Words: Reading #473

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service is its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another.

James Vila Blake

SESSION 6: Consider the future

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Gather participants in a circle. Light the chalice and share:

Reading #578: This Great Lesson

We can never make the world safe by fighting.

Every nation must learn that the people of all nations are children of God, and must share the wealth of the world.

You may say this is impracticable, far away, can never be accomplished, but it is the work we are appointed to do.

Sometime, somehow, somewhere, we must ever teach this great lesson.

Olympia Brown

Hymn #169: We Shall Overcome

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Are there any principles in Unitarian Universalism that urge us to go out as a community into the larger community to make a difference in this world?
- In what ways does your Unitarian Universalist faith inspire you to work for peace or social justice?
- Do you hold the principle of world community as an important theme in your Unitarian Universalist faith? In what ways?
- How well do you think our congregation supports its members in having a positive impact on the world community? Are there ways we can improve?
- Which Habits of the Heart do you think are the most organic in our Unitarian Universalist faith?
- Do you practice any of these Habits of the Heart in your daily life? Are there any you would like to practice more consciously?
- Can you articulate any additional Habits of the Heart that might be practiced in Unitarian Universalism?

Closing Hymn #168: One More Step

Closing Words: Reading #561

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead